

Hidden Gifts in the Library

ANNA BURKEY, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

In 2012 cultural organisations in Edinburgh were awash with curators and writers hunting for the next hidden book sculpture. A mystery artist was leaving sculptures made from the pages of books in celebration of words and libraries. Anna Burkey from the State Library of Victoria, was there and joined in on the hunt.



Once upon a time, staff at Edinburgh's Scottish Poetry Library discovered a mysterious gift. Delicately crafted and exquisitely gilded, a Poetree awaited them, growing from the pages of an old hardback and accompanied by a quiet little tag that read: "It started with your name @byleaveswelve and became a tree...We know that a library is so much more than a building full of books...a book is so much more than pages full of words...This is for you in support of libraries, books, words, ideas...a gesture (poetic maybe?)"

The mystery deepened when the National Library of Scotland found a stunning gramophone carved from the pages of Ian Rankin books, as a tribute to the Edinburgh author. This connection continued at the Filmhouse cinema in Edinburgh, when a paper cinema was discovered with miniature figures leaping into an audience that features a tiny paper Ian Rankin, clutching a pint.

Each gift bore the label 'in support of libraries, books, words, ideas' and was addressed to the organisation's Twitter account. Discussion abounded online—would the artist ever be revealed? Over the coming months, a paper dragon hatched in the Scottish Storytelling Centre, a tenement building depicted a Stevenson novel at the Writers' Museum, and light shone upon a magnifying glass at Central Library, made from the words of poet Edwin Morgan and thus killing the Rankin speculation.

Opposite: A dragon emerging from a book nest in a sculpture left at the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

Below left: The first of the book sculptures found was the Poetree at the Edinburgh's Scottish Poetry Library.

Right: A gramophone carved out of an Ian Rankin book at the National Library of Scotland.

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The unknown artist struck again at the Book Festival, with creations that caused great squeals of joy. Addressed to @EdinCityofLit came 'LOST in a good book' as the Book Festival was given a papery tea and cake with the tea bags filled with cut out letters.

The artist was clearly following the furore, responding to some of our suggestions. When Twitter mused that The Lost World would make a fine dinosaur book sculpture, lo- the National Museum of Scotland found a T-Rex bursting from the Arthur Conan Doyle classic.

The mystery was all part of the impact of the beautiful sculptures, so when a local newspaper claimed to have tracked the artist down the feeling was that we didn't want to know—we love the secrecy—and so the artist remains unnamed to all but a few. Want to see them for yourself? Take a virtual tour at: www.cityofliterature.com

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Note: For the uninitiated, the names referenced in the article with the @ symbol represent a Twitter user account. You can view tweets by these users at twitter.com/username but to join the conversation you need to sign up to Twitter. To learn about Twitter and tweets visit: <https://twitter.com/about>